156. Extension of the Railway to Cape Comorin.

Mr. D. Francis (Member, Nominated) said that no arguments from him were necessary to show that the extension of the Railway to the Cape would be beneficial to South Travancore. When it was known that the several motor buses now plying between Nagercoil and Trivandrum were insufficient to find accommodation for all passengers, not to speak of goods, nobody would doubt whether the line would be paying. Further, the line if opened would help in bringing down the annual deficit on account of the working of the Quilon–Shencottah Section. If the extension of the line were sanctioned now, the preliminary operations would take a few years and the finances of the State would by that time become prosperous to admit of further re-productive works. The Member therefore requested that the Government might bestow their serious attention to the subject.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

157. Elevation of the depressed classes.

Mr. A. K. Govindan Channar (Member, T. I. C., Kayankulam) said that the question of the elevation of the depressed classes all over India was engaging the attention of the British Government as well as of the leading public men. What the Member now proposed was to bring to the notice of the Government certain suggestions for the amelioration of the present condition of the depressed classes in Travancore. They included Pariahs, Pulayas, Koravars and various other denominations of people numbering about six lakhs. Primary education had been made free but the excessive cost on account of books, etc., made it absolutely impossible for those classes to attain it. Some of the departmental elementary schools were not still thrown open to them. In that connection, the Member said that the policy of opening separate schools for the backward classes was not sound, because, in the first place, the cost of opening such schools wherever required would increase the expenditure on education by about $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees, besides the cost on buildings, etc., and in the second place, it was a wrong policy to encourage the system of caste schools throughout the State. Admission to schools was not all they required. The present rates of fees in schools were excessive. Some twenty-five years ago when the fee was very low, the other communities had the benefit of admission to schools. In respect of the depressed classes, he proposed that the fee demanded of them now should not be far above what those communities were paying then. Such a concession was necessary in the case of books also. He was of opinion that the Government should purchase all books prescribed as texts and should print and sell them at low prices. Encouragement by way of scholarships to a few for higher education was also necessary. He considered that the practice of insisting on wearing coats in the case of lower class boys was unsuited to this hot country and was a cause of the uncleanliness of the boys.

Coming to the economic condition of the depressed classes, he said that they depended entirely on daily wages. The rates of wages were very low in Travancore and that led to the migration of workmen to other countries. Very few among the depressed classes were land-owners. He pointed out that more than 29 per cent of the arable land in the State was still left unregistered and the regi-try of the same mainly in their names would satisfy their requirements. Even if lands were registered in their names, they could not be expected to cultivate them on account of their poverty. He suggested that the culture system, introduced by the Dutch in Java and found successful there, could with advantage be adopted here also. Under that system a plot of land measuring about 500 acres was entrusted to a contractor for special kinds of cultivation for which the land was fit and thirty or forty families of depressed classes were also accommodated there. The timber for the construction of house-buildings and the capital for cultivation should be advanced by the Government. The profits obtained from cultivation should be distributed under definite rules between the cultivators, the contractor and the Government, a portion being set apart for the liquidation of the capital outlay. In a few years, when the debt was liquidated, the area should be re-distributed among the settlers, the contractor being dispensed with. The settlers would then be in a position to cultivate the area for themselves with their own capital. The Department of Agriculture or the Co-operative Societies Department might be asked to supervise and control the work of the contractor.

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